

**Running headline:** Spatiotemporal patterns of seedling establishment

**Microhabitats shift rank in suitability for seedling establishment depending on habitat type and climate**

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## Summary

**1** Spatial patterns of seedling establishment have been shown to be largely affected by differences at the microhabitat scale. However, it is far from clear whether such differences are consistent both in space and time, and how they influence the spatial structure of plant populations.

**2** We analyse the spatiotemporal variability in microhabitat quality for seedling emergence and survival of the Mediterranean tree *Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense* examining seedling dynamics at the microhabitat scale in two maple populations intermingled in pine forests and two established on stony slopes during three consecutive years with different climatic conditions.

**3** Seedling establishment varied markedly between microhabitats. In general, seedlings benefited from the presence of pre-established vegetation, with lower emergence and survival of maple seedlings in open interspaces than under adult maples, non-conspecific trees and shrubs.

**4** However, the quality of most microhabitats depended on both habitat type and year. Emergence and survival under adult maples, heterospecific trees and in open interspaces was higher in forest than in stony-slope populations, and increased significantly with summer rainfall. Shrubs, on the contrary, showed relatively high values of seedling emergence and survival at all sites and in both dry and wet years. Consequently, the benefits of living under shrubs were comparatively greater at lower precipitation levels.

**5** The different microhabitats found in heterogeneous landscapes such as Mediterranean forests vary, over relatively large spatio-temporal scales, in quality for seedling establishment. Shrubs showed the highest consistency in patterns of both seedling emergence and survival. This finding, together with the predominance of dry years in Mediterranean areas, may explain why *Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense* has a stable spatial distribution at a geographical scale with most saplings associated with shrubs. Spatiotemporal patterns of seedling dynamics at the microhabitat scale may cascade through later demographic stages, eventually impacting the spatial structure of plant populations.

**Key-words:** *Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense*, climate, facilitation, habitat types, hierarchical effects, Mediterranean mountain, microhabitat quality, seedling emergence and survival, spatiotemporal variability.

## 1 Introduction

2 The period between seed germination and seedling establishment is considered one of the most  
 3 vulnerable transitions in the life cycle of plants and, consequently, it has long been a focus of  
 4 ecological research (Harper 1977, Kitajima and Fenner 2000). Many abiotic and biotic factors can  
 5 affect seedling establishment, such as litter (Facelli and Pickett 1991, Molofsky and Augspurger 1992),  
 6 light (Kobe et al. 1995, Nicotra et al. 1999), microtopography (Augspurger 1984, Huenneke and  
 7 Sharitz 1986), soil physical and chemical characteristics (Herrera 2002), seed arrival (Dalling et al.  
 8 2002, Russo and Augspurger 2004), herbivory (Ostfeld and Canham 1993, Gómez et al. 2003),  
 9 pathogens (Augspurger 1983, Packer and Clay 2000) and competition with herbs (De Steven 1991).

10 All these factors are highly heterogeneous in space (Mack and Pyke 1983, Streng et al. 1989,  
 11 Houle 1992), varying at different scales, such as among geographical areas (García et al. 1999,  
 12 Castro et al. 2004), among habitats in a region (Herrera et al. 1994, Traveset et al. 2003), or among  
 13 microhabitats within a habitat (Chambers 2001, Garrido 2003). In a recent review on the variation of  
 14 demographic processes at different scales, Kollmann (2000) suggested that patterns of seedling  
 15 establishment are affected mainly by differences between microhabitats. Therefore, an examination of  
 16 which microhabitats, under which environmental conditions, constitute safe sites (*sensu* Harper et al.  
 17 1961) for seedling establishment is essential to understand the spatial structure and dynamics of plant  
 18 populations. Nevertheless, since most studies analysing regeneration dynamics have been conducted  
 19 in only one or two populations (Clark et al. 1999), it is far from clear whether differences between  
 20 microhabitats are consistent in space or highly dependent on the study sites.

21 Even fewer studies extend the discussion of differences in microhabitat quality to temporal  
 22 scales. Consequently, it is poorly understood whether levels of seedling establishment are strongly  
 23 differentiated between microhabitats in some years, but not in others. Some studies point in that  
 24 direction, showing the quality of microhabitats for recruitment to fluctuate inter-annually due to  
 25 variation in climatic conditions (Greenlee and Callaway 1996, Tielbörger and Kadmon 2000, Ibañez  
 26 and Schupp 2001). High temporal instability in the environmental mosaic faced by seedlings is  
 27 important because it could translate into a population without a stable spatial distribution (Fowler  
 28 1988), whereas strong temporal consistency would result in spatial association with high-quality  
 29 patches.

Our main goal is to analyse spatiotemporal variability in microhabitat quality for seedling emergence and survival of the Mediterranean tree *Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense* (Boiss.) Font Quer & Rothm (Aceraceae) by following seedling dynamics in four populations during three consecutive years with different climatic conditions. Across its range, this species occupies contrasting habitat types, such as forests and stony slopes, enabling the analysis of seedling dynamics under potentially different limitations for establishment. Maple populations occur as a mosaic of soil patches covered by different tree and shrub species, interspersed with bare ground. Since wind-dispersed maple seeds reach all these microhabitats (Gómez-Aparicio 2004), seedling emergence and survival constitute a key filter of dispersal patterns, determining spatial population structure over the long term. We address the following questions: 1) do between-microhabitat differences in seedling emergence and survival depend on the study site? 2) is the suitability of a microhabitat for seedling establishment consistent over time? and 3) do all microhabitats show the same spatio-temporal variation in quality?

## Material and methods

### STUDY SPECIES

*Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense* is an endemic Iberian-Mauritanian deciduous tree. It has a fragmented distribution composed of small patches scattered throughout the mountains of the south-eastern Iberian Peninsula, Balearic Islands and northern Morocco (López-González 1994). It has been catalogued as Vulnerable by the IUCN (2000) and included in the recent Red List of Threatened Vascular Plants of Andalusia (Blanca et al. 2000). Populations appear at 1100-2000 m a.s.l. on north-facing slopes, in shady ravines or near riverbanks, i.e. where Mediterranean summer drought is partially mitigated by special topographic or soil conditions. Seeds disperse from September to December and seedlings emerge the following spring (April-June), although some seeds may require two periods of low temperatures to break dormancy and germinate.

### STUDY DESIGN

Two study sites were located in the Sierra Nevada National Park and two in the Sierra de Baza Natural Park, the two mountain ranges approximately 80 km apart in Southern Spain. The climate is Mediterranean, with precipitation concentrated in late autumn and winter (often as snow) and hot, dry summers. Sierra Nevada receives higher annual precipitation than Sierra de Baza ( $846.5 \pm 55.7$  mm vs.  $527.4 \pm 40.9$  mm; 1991-2002), although both have similarly low summer rainfall (June-August:  $47.3 \pm 5.5$

mm and  $46.1 \pm 4.3$  mm; 1991-2002). Winters are cold and snow is common, persisting up to 2 months, and frost occurs from November to April. The bedrock is calcareous. In each mountain range, one site consisted of maple intermingled with *Pinus sylvestris* forest (forest populations, hereafter) and the other a maple population situated 2-4km away on a stony slope (stony-slope populations). Site types differed mainly in soil substrate and canopy cover, with stony-slope populations on a substrate largely composed of bare soil with loose stones, compared with forest populations which have stable substrate and higher tree cover (Table 1). We identified four microhabitats types (i.e. distinct homogeneous patches of habitat ranging from <1 metre to several metres in diameter; García 2001): Maple, under the canopy of adult maples; Canopy, under the canopy of non-conspecific adult trees together with shrubs >1.5 m in height (1-2 species per site, Table 1); Shrub, under the canopy of shrubs <1.5 m in height (1-3 species per site, Table 1) and Open, open interspaces among woody vegetation.

#### SEEDLING EMERGENCE

Emergence was experimentally studied by sowing seeds in the field. Seeds were collected in November 2001 from 5-6 parent maples per mountain range, and kept at constant temperature (3-5 °C) at La Cortijuela Botanical Garden (1640 m a.s.l., Sierra Nevada National Park) until sowing. Seeds from different trees were mixed to provide two seed pools, one for Sierra Nevada and another for Sierra de Baza, and used for sowing at the two sites within the corresponding mountain range. In the laboratory, a fraction of each pool (n=100) was weighed and examined (by removing the pericarp) to estimate viability. Previous experience has shown that embryos estimated visually as viable have proven viable after a tetrazolium test in more than 90% of cases (author's unpublished data). Seed weight and viability rates were similar in both pools ( $37.3 \pm 1.2$  mg and 12% viability in Sierra Nevada,  $35.5 \pm 1.1$  mg and 10% viability in Sierra de Baza). In December 2001, groups of 5 seeds were sown in 30 haphazardly assigned points per microhabitat (n=3150 seeds). Within each group, seeds were sown 2 cm apart and at 2 cm in depth. In the Canopy and Shrub microhabitats, sowing points were replicated for each of the canopy and shrub species present at that particular site. The number of seeds per point was chosen as a compromise to maximize the probabilities of having at least one emergence per point (due to low seed viability) while avoiding density-dependent effects. Each sampling station was protected by a wire cage to prevent seed predation and additional seed rain and

all naturally-occurring seeds were removed before sowing. Emergence was monitored fortnightly from April 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of June, when no additional emergence was registered. Survival of emerged seedlings was reviewed at the end of the summer (mid September). Throughout the paper, emergence is corrected for viability rates, i.e. percentage emergence is divided by 0.12 and 0.10 in Sierra Nevada and Sierra de Baza populations, respectively.

## SURVIVAL OF NATURAL SEEDLINGS

For three years (2000, 2001 and 2002), 100-200 newly emerged seedlings (depending on the natural availability) were marked individually per microhabitat (n=7200 seedlings). In Canopy and Shrub microhabitats, 100-200 seedlings were marked under each species present. In the stony-slope population of Sierra de Baza, seedlings were marked only in 2001 and 2002. Seedlings were censused twice a year after summer (September) and after winter (April). The most likely cause of any death was recorded, distinguishing between drought (seedlings brown and shrivelled), frost (seedlings uprooted due to frost heave), herbivory (seedlings with the epicotyl consumed), physical damage (due to trampling, substrate movements or fallen branches) and light limitation (seedlings with extremely thin and almost transparent green leaves). Seedlings that were not relocated were excluded from the analyses.

## DATA ANALYSES

Seedling emergence and survival were analysed using Generalized Logit Models (Proc CATMOD, SAS 2002). For emergence, the presence/absence of emerged seedlings per sowing point was introduced as dependent variable (the number of seedlings per point was not used because it was zero in 81.3% of the cases). We fitted the dependent variable to a binomial function, with mountain range, site (nested in mountain range) and microhabitat as main factors. The same model was used for the analyses of survival after the first summer of seedlings that had emerged in the experimental sowings, but with seedling state (alive vs. dead) as the binomial dependent variable. For the survival of naturally established seedlings, mountain range, site (nested in mountain range), microhabitat and year were introduced as main factors and survival after the first summer (for cohorts 2001 and 2002) as binomial dependent variable. Data for the 2000 cohort were not included in the analysis due to the lack of data for one site. When a factor was significant, differences among levels were explored using

paired  $\chi^2$  tests. To control for experiment-wise type I error produced by multiple comparisons, we adjusted the probabilities of error to  $\alpha=0.05$ , using the sequential Bonferroni technique (Rice 1989). Non-significant interactions among sources of variation were pooled with the error term to improve the test (Zar 1996).

We used regressions to explore the relationship between summer rainfall (cumulative rainfall in June, July and August) and seedling survival after the first summer. Climatic data were obtained from the nearest meteorological station to the study sites (La Cortijuela Botanical Garden for both Sierra Nevada sites and Narvaez Meteorological Station for Sierra de Baza sites) and regressions were performed on mean survival of the two populations in a mountain range (except for Sierra de Baza in 2000) and study year ( $n=6$ ), in order to avoid pseudoreplication. Means are shown  $\pm 1$  S.E.

## Results

### SEEDLING EMERGENCE

Experimental emergence was no higher than 7% in any site, but correction for the low viability rates increased mean total emergence to 36.6%. Emergence varied between sites and microhabitats (Table 2). It was higher in the two forest populations (48.3% in Sierra Nevada and 54.8% in Sierra de Baza, corrected values) than in the two stony-slope populations (21.6% and 21.5%). Emergence was highest under heterospecific canopies and lowest in open interspaces (Fig. 1), although differences between microhabitats depended on study site (significant Site[Mountain range] x Microhabitat interaction term; Table 2). Thus, increased emergence under conspecific and heterospecific canopies was observed only in forest populations (Fig. 1). Emergence under shrubs did not, however, vary between study sites, being consistently higher than in open areas.

### SEEDLING SURVIVAL

The survival of experimental seedlings varied between sites and microhabitats (Table 2). It was higher in the two forest (46.1% in Sierra Nevada and 41.2% in Sierra de Baza) than in the two stony-slope populations (21.3% and 29.4%). Survival in open areas was significantly lower than in the other three microhabitats (Fig. 1). Survival in all microhabitats except under shrubs was significantly higher in the two forest than in the two stony-slope populations (Fig. 1, significant Site[Mountain range] x Microhabitat interaction term in Table 2), indicating that the quality of a microhabitat for survival of

experimental seedlings varied with site. Spatial patterns of survival of naturally established seedlings were similar to those found for experimental seedlings, varying among sites and microhabitats (Table 3). Average survival was around 30%, with 84.9% of the observed mortality due to summer drought (5.3% frost, 2.5% herbivory, 2.2% physical damage and 5.1% light limitation). Survival was lower in the two forest than in the two stony-slope populations, and in open areas than in any other microhabitat. However, differences between microhabitats varied depending on the site considered (significant Site[Mountain range] x Microhabitat interaction; Table 3). Thus, between-site differences in survival were consistently less significant under shrubs than in any other microhabitat in the three study years (Fig. 2).

Survival varied significantly among years (Table 3), being more than two-fold higher in 2002 (53.2%) than in 2001 (22.3%). Although not included in the model, survival in 2000 showed a similar magnitude (23.9%) and between-microhabitat distribution as in 2001 (Fig. 2). Between-microhabitat differences in survival were not consistent across years, as shown by the significant Microhabitat x Year interaction term (Table 3). Thus, although overall survival was higher in 2002 than in 2001, survival under shrubs was the least affected at all sites, so that this microhabitat had the highest survival in 2001 but among the lowest in 2002 (Fig. 2). Regressions of rainfall and first summer survival showed that survival increased significantly with rainfall in all microhabitats except under shrubs (Fig. 3).

## Discussion

### SPATIAL PATTERNS OF SEEDLING EMERGENCE AND SURVIVAL

Our results show that both emergence and survival of maple seedlings at all four sites is highly microhabitat-dependent, being much lower in open interspaces than under pre-established vegetation, either trees or shrubs. This result agrees with other studies conducted in Mediterranean systems, where pre-existing vegetation facilitates emergence and survival of woody seedlings (Herrera et al. 1994, García 2001, Garrido 2003, Gómez et al. 2003, Castro et al. 2004). We found that even adult maples benefited seedlings, despite the negative interactions between seedlings and conspecific adults that have been commonly reported in other Mediterranean (Herrera et al. 1994, Rey and Alcántara 2000, Nathan et al. 2000) and non-Mediterranean systems (Augspurger 1984, Streng et al. 1989, Kollmann and Grubb 1999). Emergence and survival could have been facilitated by several



mechanisms, such as the reduction of radiation and soil desiccation (Kitzberger et al. 2000, Schenk and Mahall 2002), production of litter that diminishes water evaporation losses (Evans and Young 1970, Fowler 1988), reduction of soil compaction (Verdú and García-Fayos 1996) or increase of soil macroporosity and water storage (Callaway et al. 1991, Joffre and Rambal 1993). Among all of these factors, our previous experimental work suggests that the “canopy effect”, that is, the modification of the aboveground microclimate by established vegetation, constitutes a major facilitation mechanism of seedling establishment in Mediterranean systems that can be even more relevant than the modification of soil properties (Gómez-Aparicio et al. 2005b).

The quality of a microhabitat for seedling establishment was highly dependent on the habitat type. Thus, whereas open areas and shrubs always presented, respectively, low and high quality for emergence, the quality of conspecific and heterospecific canopies varied significantly between forest and stony-slope populations (Fig. 1). These two microhabitats showed the highest emergence percentages in forest populations, but when located in stony-slope populations, emergence diminished three-fold to values comparable to those registered for open areas. Similarly, the greatest inter-site variation in microhabitat quality for seedling survival occurred under tree cover (both conspecific and heterospecific) and in open areas, whereas emergence under shrubs was similarly high in forest and stony-slope populations (Fig. 1 and 2). This shift was presumably mediated by differences in a local-scale factor: substrate in forest populations is composed largely of stable mineral soil, whereas in stony-slope populations the well developed soil is concentrated under shrubs and the ground in the remaining microhabitats is covered by loose stones. Such substrate negatively affects seedling emergence due to a low root-soil contact (Chambers 1995, Vilá and Lloret 2000), and its mobility implies an additional risk for seedling survival. In fact, although summer drought was the main cause of mortality, many dried seedlings in stony-slope populations were also uprooted or covered by stones, implying that damage from mobile stones could have led to death by desiccation. Therefore, local characteristics (substrate type) dilute differences among microhabitats (specifically between open areas, conspecific canopies and heterospecific canopies) in quality for seedling establishment, showing the hierarchical control that larger spatial scales can exert on the expression of differences at smaller scales (Kotliar and Wiens 1990, Turner et al. 2001).

## INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TEMPORAL AND THE SPATIAL SCALE OF SEEDLING ESTABLISHMENT

Seedling survival varied greatly inter-annually (see also De Jong and Klinkhamer 1988, and Traveset et al. 2003), from around 20% in dry years (2000 and 2001) to > 50% in the wet year (2002). Summer 2002 was one of 21 years in the last century where rainfall was >25% above the mean, whereas 2000 and 2001 represent two of the driest years since 1902 (Fig. 3a). The positive effect of rainfall allowed a high percentage of seedlings in 2002 to survive their critical first summer.

Our results also show that inter-annual climatic variation can alter not only the magnitude of seedling survival, but also its spatial distribution between microhabitats. Whereas in dry years survival was highest under shrubs, shrub understories turned out to be one of the least suitable microhabitats for survival in 2002, with percentages even lower than open interspaces. When survival after the first summer was related to summer rainfall for each microhabitat considered, shrubs proved to be the best microhabitat for seedling survival at low precipitation levels (Fig. 3b), perhaps because shrubs not only reduce radiation by percentages similar to those of trees, but also present thicker litter layers and lower soil compaction than any other microhabitat (author's unpublished data). These abiotic modifications should improve seedling water status by reducing evapotranspiration losses and by allowing roots to explore a larger soil profile, thereby increasing the seedling's probability of withstanding summer drought. However, as rainfall increased, survival under conspecific and heterospecific canopies, as well as in open areas, rose by a logarithmic function, whereas under shrubs it remained constant at around 50%. Shrubs were the only microhabitat where summer rainfall and survival did not significantly correlate so that in the mid range of the gradient explored, survival under shrubs was equivalent to survival under tree canopy, both conspecific and heterospecific. As precipitation increased still further, shrubs became even lower quality microhabitat than tree species (Maple and Canopy; Fig. 3b), probably due to a higher overlap in resource use among seedlings and shrubs than among seedlings and trees. These findings show that the quality of a microhabitat for recruitment is highly dependent on climatic variables. Consequently, the landscape can change from being, at low precipitation levels, a low-quality matrix for recruitment with high-quality patches (shrubs) to become, at high precipitation levels, a high-quality matrix where only open interspaces constitute patches of comparatively lower quality.

## CONSISTENCY OF MICROHABITAT QUALITY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

The great variability reported here limits the categorization of a specific microhabitat as a safe site for recruitment, at least in environments, such as Mediterranean forests, characterised by high spatiotemporal heterogeneity. The same microhabitat differed in suitability depending on the habitat type (forests vs. stony-slopes), due to a hierarchy of abiotic factors influencing recruitment (soil substrate over canopy effects). Such hierarchies have rarely been documented in the literature, but are crucial to understand which factors limit the regeneration of a species on broad spatial scales. The connection of large spatial scales with relatively large temporal scales enabled us to show that, even within the same population, microhabitat quality can vary substantially with climatic conditions and, therefore, with the level of abiotic stress in the system. Moreover, the spatiotemporal variability in quality appears not to affect to all the microhabitats evenly. The shrub microhabitat showed spatial and temporal consistency, and had a significant advantage over the remaining microhabitats in dry years. The general positive effect of shrubs on seedling establishment, together with the fact that dry summers are the rule in the Mediterranean, could explain why populations of *Acer opalus* subsp. *granatense* have a stable spatial distribution at a geographical scale, with most saplings found under shrubs throughout its range in the Iberian Peninsula (Gómez-Aparicio et al. 2005a). Spatiotemporal patterns of seedling emergence and survival at the microhabitat scale may be strong enough to cascade through later demographic stages, eventually impacting the spatial structure of plant populations.

## Acknowledgements

We thank the Consejería de Medio Ambiente, Junta de Andalucía, for permitting our field work in the Sierra Nevada National Park and Sierra de Baza Natural Park. We are especially grateful to Sergio de Haro, Elena Baraza and Jose Antonio Hódar for their help in the field. Peter Klinkhamer and two anonymous reviewers provided helpful comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. David Nesbitt improved the English version. This study was supported by a PFPU-MECD grant to L.G.A., the Andalusian government grant (PAI) rnm-220, the University of Granada (UGR) grant 2002-30P-3176, and projects REN2001-4552-E and HETEROMED REN2002-04041-CO2-01/GLO from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology (MCYT).

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- 1 Received 15 March 2005; revision accepted 18 May 2005
- 2 Handling editor: Peter Klinkhamer



**Table 1** Main characteristics of the four study sites. The cover of the different microhabitats was determined by means of 25x2 m transects (n=10 per site), visually estimating cover percentages at each 1x2 m square.

	Site			
	Sierra Nevada		Sierra de Baza	
	Forest	Stony-slope	Forest	Stony-slope
<i>Location (UTM)</i>	30SVG5905	30SVG5904	30SWG1438	30SWG1433
<i>Altitude (m a.s.l.)</i>	1850	1920	1850	2000
<i>Orientation</i>	NW	NW	NW	NE
<i>Slope (°)</i>	40	40	30	35
<i>Microhabitat cover (%)</i>				
Maple	15.0	21.9	25.8	13.0
Canopy <sup>1</sup>	17.1	2.5	20.1	13.5
Shrub <sup>2</sup>	29.9	11.3	9.7	15.1
Open	27.9	55.5	38.6	43.1

<sup>1</sup>Canopy includes *Pinus sylvestris* and *Taxus baccata* in the forest population of Sierra Nevada, *Amelanchier ovalis* in the stony-slope population of Sierra Nevada, and *Pinus sylvestris* in the two sites of Sierra de Baza.

<sup>2</sup>Shrub includes *Ononis aragonensis*, *Juniperus communis* and *Berberis hispanica* in the forest population of Sierra Nevada, *Ononis aragonensis* in the stony-slope population of Sierra Nevada, *Prunus ramburii* and *Crataegus monogyna* in the forest population of Sierra de Baza, and *Juniperus communis* and *Berberis hispanica* in the stony-slope population of Sierra de Baza.

**Table 2** Summary of models analyzing differences between microhabitats, and their interaction with the site, in emergence and survival of experimental seedlings in 2002.

Variable	Factors	df	$L-R\chi^2$	p
Emergence	Mountain range	1	1.51	0.2228
	Site [Mountain range]	3	9.78	0.0205
	Microhabitat	3	15.74	0.0013
	Site [Mountain range] x Microhabitat	9	19.71	0.0198
	Model	16	40.28	0.0007
Survival	Mountain range	1	2.09	0.1579
	Site [Mountain range]	3	10.82	0.0127
	Microhabitat	3	15.91	0.0012
	Site [Mountain range] x Microhabitat	9	21.45	0.0108
	Model	16	44.09	0.0002

**Table 3** Summary of models analyzing the differences between sites, microhabitats and years in survival after the first summer of natural seedlings in 2001 and 2002.

Factors	df	$L-R\chi^2$	p
Mountain range	1	0.49	0.4798
Site [Mountain range]	3	33.45	<0.0001
Microhabitat	3	115.24	<0.0001
Year	1	231.79	<0.0001
Site [Mountain range] x Microhabitat	9	120.05	<0.0001
Microhabitat x Year	3	86.21	<0.0001
Model	20	1171.82	<0.0001

## Figure legends

**Fig. 1** Emergence (corrected for seed viability) and survival of experimental seedlings in 2002. In the upper plot for each cohort, bars represent the average per microhabitat (all the sites pooled). In the lower plot, symbols represent the mean per site and microhabitat combination. Values for emergence are mean $\pm$ SE (percentage of seed emergence per sowing point). Different letters show significant differences between sites within microhabitat at  $\alpha<0.05$  after Bonferroni correction. Asterisks denote the significance of the between-site differences in microhabitat quality. \*\*\*\* $p<0.0001$ , \*\*\* $p<0.001$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ , \* $p<0.05$ . F, forest population; SL, stony-slope population; SN, Sierra Nevada; SB, Sierra de Baza.

**Fig. 2** Survival of natural seedlings after the first summer during the three years of study. In the upper parts, bars represent the average per microhabitat (all the sites pooled). In the lower parts of the boxes, symbols represent the mean per site and microhabitat combination. Statistical conventions as in Figure 1.

**Fig. 3** a) Summer rainfall over the last century (1902-2002). Data come from the Observatory of Cartuja (750 m a.s.l., Granada) and show a highly significant correlation with data available in the nearest meteorological stations to the study sites, both in Sierra Nevada (La Cortijuela Botanical Garden, 1865 m a.s.l.;  $r^2=0.73$ ,  $n=12$ ,  $p=0.0002$ ) and Sierra de Baza (Narvaez Meteorological Station, 1390 m a.s.l.;  $r^2=0.69$ ,  $n=12$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). The black line indicates the mean for the sere ( $24.01\pm2.22$  mm), and black points represent years with summer rainfall deviating above the mean by  $>25\%$ . b) Regressions between summer rainfall (cumulative rainfall in June, July and August) and seedling survival after the first summer, with and without distinguishing among microhabitats.  $N=6$  in all cases, with one data point per mountain range (mean of the two populations, except for Sierra de Baza in 2000) and study year.

Fig. 1

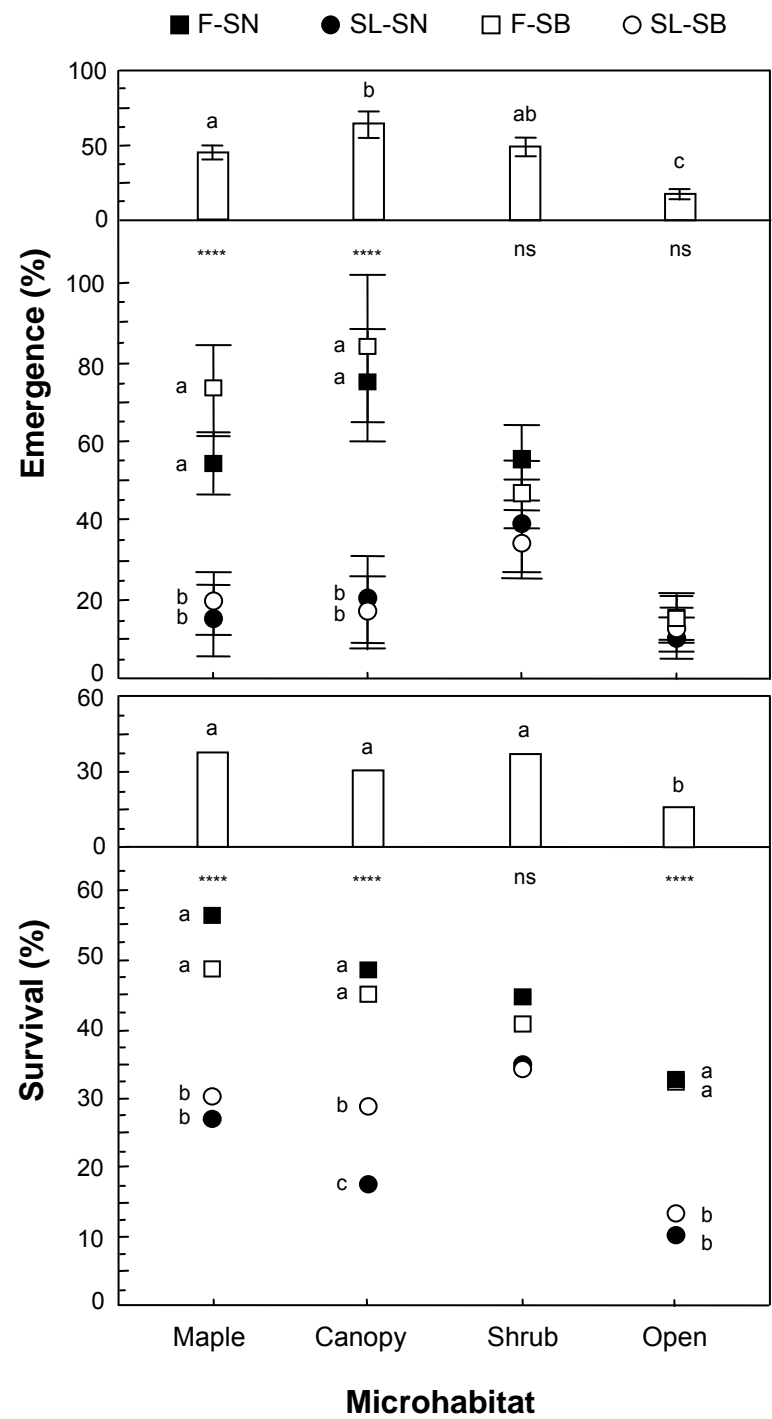


Fig. 2

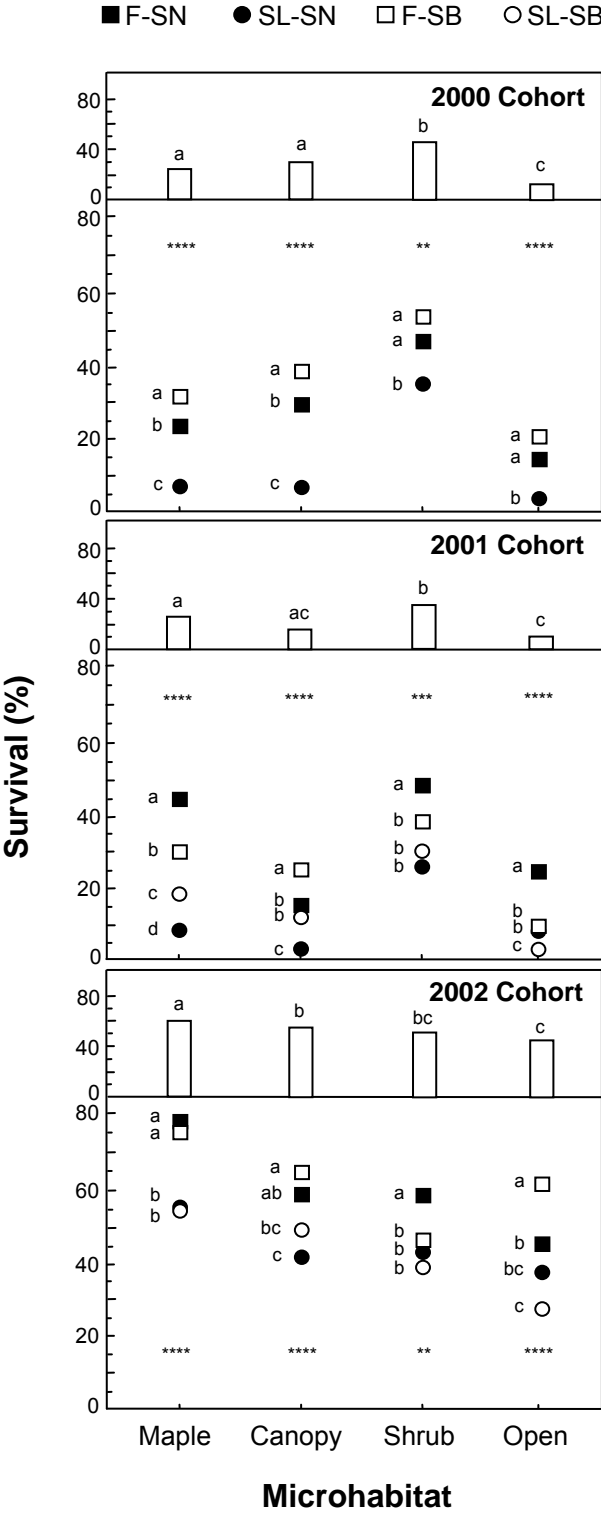


Fig. 3

